

## Message Text

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22-12

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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R 200503Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2951

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 17008

FOLLOWING TEL MADRAS 1951 DTD 19 DEC 75 RCVD NEW DELHI BEING  
REPEATED TO YOU. QUOTE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE MADRAS 1951

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJECT: KERALA CONGRESS TO JOIN ACHUTHA MENON MINISTRY

REF: MADRAS 1934

1. KERALA CHIEF MINISTER C. ACHUTHA MENON TOLD PRESSMEN IN TRIVANDRUM DECEMBER 18 THAT THE KERALA CONGRESS WILL BE JOINING HIS FIVE-PARTY COALITION MINISTRY BEFORE THE NEW YEAR. EVERY-THING HAS ENDED WELL. WE HAVE REACHED AN UNDERSTANDING," MENON SAID AFTER A MEETING BETWEEN RULING FRONT PARTNERS AND KERALA CONGRESS LEADERS HELD IN TRIVANDRUM THE SAME DAY. HE ADDED THAT SWEARING IN DATE OF THE NEW KERALA CONGRESS MINISTERS AND THEIR PORTFOLIOS WOULD BE ANNOUNCED "IN DUE COURSE" AFTER THE KERALA CONGRESS STATE COMMITTEE AND THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RATIFY THE AGREEMENT AND AFTER THE INFORMATION IS CONVEYED TO THE GOVERNOR OF KERALA.

2. K.M. GEORGE, CHAIRMAN OF THE KERALA CONGRESS, TOLD NEWSMEN IN TRIVANDRUM DEC 18 THAT HIS PARTY'S STATE COMMITTEE AND  
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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE WILL MEET JUST BEFORE AND AFTER CHRISTMAS TO RATIFY THE UNDERSTANDING REACHED WITH THE RULING FRONT. THE UNDERSTANDING, HE SAID, WAS A "PACKAGE DEAL" CONVERGING PORTFOLIO ALLOCATION, ALLOTMENT OF SEATS TO KERALA CONGRESS IN THE NEXT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS AND ELECTORAL POLICY. THE SPECIFIC AGREEMENT REACHED NOW RELATES TO PORTFOLIOS, HE ADDED. KERALA CONGRESS LEADERS WOULD ALSO MEET PRIME MINISTER GANDHI AND K. C. PANT, GOI MINISTER FOR ENERGY, EARLY NEXT WEEK BEFORE JOINING THE MINISTRY. ASKED WHEN KERALA CONGRESS NOMINEES WOULD BE SWORN IN AS MINISTERS, GEORGE SAID, "PROBABLY BEFORE CHRISTMAS OF IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER." ASKED HOW MANY KERALA CONGRESS NOMINEES WOULD JOIN THE MINISTRY, GEORGE SAID THAT THE CHIEF MINISTER HAD ALREADY STATED THAT THE CABINET WHICH HAD NOW 13 MINISTERS COULD NOT EXCEED 15. THIS WOULD LEAVE TWO PLACES FOR THE KERALA CONGRESS. ACCORDING TO RULING FRONT SOURCES, THE KERALA CONGRESS MAY ALSO BE OFFERED SPEAKERSHIP OF THE ASSEMBLY, WHICH FELL VACANT FOLLOWING THE RESIGNATION OF K. MOIDEENKUTTY HAJI OF THE MUSLIM LEAGUE, WHO DEFECTED TO THE REBEL MUSLIM LEAGUE.

3. THE PROTRACTED NEGOTIATIONS OF THE PAST THREE MONTHS BETWEEN LEADERS OF THE RULING FRONT, KERALA CONGRESS AND THE ALL-INDIA CONGRESS (R) APPEAR TO HAVE NOW BORNE FRUIT. THE INDUCTION OF THE KERALA CONGRESS WILL GIVE THE ACHUTHA MENON MINISTRY FOR THE FIRST TIME A COMFORTABLE MAJORITY (77 OUT OF 134, TWO SEATS VACANT) IN THE KERALA ASSEMBLY. THE WEANING AWAY OF THE KERALA CONGRESS, WHICH UNTIL RECENTLY WAS A PARTNER OF THE CPM-LED OPPOSITION FRONT, IS UNDOUBTEDLY A DEVICE TO ISOLATE THE CPM AND THE RULING FRONT WILL PROBABLY HAVE AN EDGE OVER THE CPM FRONT IN ANY EARLY STATE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS.

EAVES

UNQUOTE  
SAXBE

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NNN

\*\*\* Current Handling Restrictions \*\*\* n/a

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